


TRUMAN, Mary S.

DRAWER 26

COMPARISON

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Abraham Lincoln Comparisons

Harry Truman

Excerpts from newspapers and other sources

From the files of the
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection

Milburn P. Akers

If Harry Truman walked at midnight

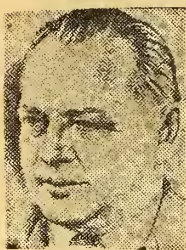
SPRINGFIELD

PERHAPS MR. TRUMAN, who spent Tuesday evening in this city, should have remained another hour or so. For Abraham Lincoln, so the poet Vachel Lindsay wrote, walks the streets of Springfield at midnight. And, had the two chanced to meet, Old Abe, who made no more of a success of his New Salem general store and grog shop than Mr. Truman did of his Kansas City haberdashery, might have had a few friendly

words for him.

The two, with Secret Service men and newspaper reporters at safe distance, could have strolled down 8th St. toward the old Lincoln home at the corner of Jackson. And there, sitting on the porch, Old Abe, busy whittling, would have said:

"Harry, I'm struck by some parallels. You and I both come from old Kentucky stock, you know. We both went to storekeeping. And, as they say, we didn't make a go of it. Fact is, I was right happy to get that job as deputy surveyor; just the same as you were happy, when you had to close your store to get on the payroll as a road commissioner.



Akers

"And we both were in the Army, too, of course. I never said much about that. The Blackhawk War wasn't much. But one day, after I'd served awhile in the legislature, I got elected to Congress; just like you went to the Senate.

"You did better, after you went to the Senate, than I did after getting elected to the House. One term was all I could get. But you got re-elected.

* * *

"ONCE, AFTER THEY'D organized the Republican Party, some of the fellows wanted me to run for Vice President, too. But I didn't. I hear they made you take it. Anyway, four years later, with the Democrats split three ways--just like they are now, Harry--I got elected President. I had troubles with the South, too.

"No sooner did I get down to Washington than folks were talking appeasement. They wanted me to appease the South, Harry; let the erring sisters depart in peace, some folks said. But I didn't. I figured my job was to save the Union. So I provisioned Fort Sumter, and war started.

"It's not much different today, Harry. Some folks want you to get out of Europe; to appease Russia. But you're doing just what I did; you are provisioning those Western democracies. Well, Harry, your Marshall Plan and your Truman Doctrine might lead to war. But you've got to do it; you've got to save Western civilization just as I had to save the Union.

"Of course, a lot of folks didn't like it. They used to say I was inept; that I didn't have the capacity to be President. And maybe I didn't. What man has? That young fellow Dewey (maybe I shouldn't talk this way about a Republican, Harry), that young fellow Dewey--well, if he gets into the White House he too may find the job isn't easy.

* * *

"I HEAR TELL, Harry, the newspapers say a lot of mean things about you. Shucks. Get out the books and read what they had to say about me when I ran for re-election in '64.

"Now about this election, Harry; you're doing right in getting out and talking with the people; after all, this is still the people's country. Keep it that way.

"Harry, I got to go; Mrs. Lincoln's calling me. Just let me say this: Our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. It's the President's job to preserve that liberty and to establish that equality. Remember that, Harry; if you do, the job's not too big--even for a couple of once bankrupt storekeepers."

Comparison

Lincoln—Truman

**EXTENSION OF REMARKS
OF**

HON. ROBERT L. RAMSAY

OF WEST VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 15, 1951

Mr. RAMSAY. Mr. Speaker, under leave to revise and extend my remarks, I include therein an excerpt from the column, Taylor Made, published in the Grafton News, of Grafton, W. Va. This very popular feature is written by Mr. Charles W. T. Lockard, publisher of the Grafton News, and one of the finest weekly newspapermen in West Virginia, follows:

The current observance of the birthday of the now admittedly great Abraham Lincoln causes us to reflect and call the attention of our Republican friends on the similarities of Lincoln and President Truman. Both are men of the people; both were of humble birth; both received meager education; both failed in private business; both were or are the object of bitter ridicule; both were or are unpopular with the majority of the press of their day; both are said to be men of strong will; both are known champions of human liberty and freedom, regardless of race, color, or religion; both suffered antagonists within and without their parties; both had assassin's shots directed at them by fanatics (Lincoln was a shot victim, but Truman's would-be assassin was a poor shot); Lincoln fought a dogged and determined battle to bring peace and freedom to all the people of this Nation and engaged in a war to accomplish this end; President Truman is now fighting a dogged and determined battle to bring peace and freedom to all the peoples of the world through the United Nations and is sending our fighting men to war to accomplish this aim; the fiscal policies of both were or are under attack; the administrations of both men are or were accused of committing great blunders. But today, Lincoln, who was hated in his day, was honored some generations later now has a great national shrine in his honor on the banks of the Potomac. Truman, fighting the same battle as Lincoln fought—but on a larger scale—is today getting the same treatment from his people as Lincoln did some 80-odd years ago. Many of us will live to see Truman honored as Lincoln now is. So think it over boys. Lincoln, a be-rated man in his time, is a great man in the eyes of posterity. Truman, too, is an equally great man and history will prove it. Just you wait and see.

Lincoln's Proclamation Was No Precedent For Truman's Seizure

To the Editor of The Star:

Apropos of the President's seizure of the steel mills, I have read various attempts by columnists and others to establish a direct parallel between this action and President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation. There is no parallel. Those who make such assertions manifest either a crass ignorance of American history or an equally disqualifying disregard for factual accuracy. Not only did Lincoln recognize and freely acknowledge that he had neither legal nor constitutional authority to end slavery by seizing the slaves of citizens of the United States but the leaders of the South recognized and acknowledged his act for what it was—a war measure taken only against openly avowed, armed and active opponents of the authority of the federal government.

The then Governor of Alabama, W. C. Oates, a former Confederate colonel, frankly stated, in an address at Chickamauga, his acceptance of Lincoln's act solely as a war measure. While the South never placed the slaves in their armed

forces, these same slaves were a most vital war potential. Not only did they produce the food that enabled the South to keep an army in the field, but they built many of the important fortifications that slowed or stopped the advance of Federal troops. They repaired railroads, drove transportation wagons and performed all manner of essential work contributing to the Confederate war effort. Prior to the proclamation, it was generally the custom of Federal officers to turn back runaway slaves on the grounds that they were not fighting to end slavery but to restore the Union. After the proclamation they gave sanctuary to such runaways but not to end slavery. It was done to deprive the South of this vital war potential.

It might be well to refresh our memories. The proclamation read in part "—That, on the first day of January in the year of our Lord, 1863, all persons held as slaves within any state or designated part of a state, the people whereof shall be in rebellion against the United States shall be then, thenceforward and forever free—" This freed no slave in Delaware, Maryland, West Virginia, Kentucky or Missouri. Had there been no further legal action it would not have ended slavery. It was designed for one purpose—to deprive active opponents of the national authority of a most vital war potential.

For a parallel between this action and President Truman's seizure of the steel mills to exist the owners and workers, of about equal numbers, incidentally, would have to renounce their American citizenship, give open, armed resistance to the federal authority and use the products of the mills to support that action. To consider such conditions as possible would be as absurd and ridiculous as to assume a direct parallel between the two presidential actions. Supporters of President Truman's action will have to look elsewhere for comparable presidential action.

H. N. FULLENWIDER.
Waveland.

HAD HARRY BEEN IN ABE'S SHOES

On this Lincoln's Birthday, 1952, we find ourselves sunk in fascinated speculation as to what would have happened to the United States of America if Harry S. Truman had been President during the Civil War in 1861-65 instead of Abraham Lincoln.

Judging from his Korean war performances, Harry might well have favored going to war, as Lincoln did, when the Confederates fired on Fort Sumter in the Charleston, S. C., harbor.

Harry as Civil War President

At that point, though, it seems a safe guess the resemblance between the two men's actions would have ended.

Harry, on his Korea record, would have proceeded to try not to win the war—the more so as Great Britain didn't want the Union to win, just as the United Nations does not want a clearcut victory in Korea now.

Lincoln's long search for a general who could win would not have been duplicated by Harry. Gen. George B. McClellan would have been his fair-haired boy—because McClellan believed in equipping an army to the last dress uniform brass button before going out to fight, and then could usually find an excuse for putting off the attack.

Gen. Ulysses S. Grant's "I propose to fight it out on this line if it takes all Summer" would have been heresy to Harry, just as was Gen. Douglas MacArthur's desire, coupled with a plan, to win the Korean war decisively.

When and if the Confederates had whispered a hint of willingness to talk peace, Harry on his Korean showing would have jumped at the proposal. For all we know, the armistice talks would still be going on, while the Confederates built up strength for another push.

A plurality of the voters picked themselves a strange enough President for peacetime when they elected Truman in 1948. But they picked themselves an even stranger one to handle a war—any war.

Chicago Daily News 2-12-52

Lincoln's Deficiencies

The other day a Mailbox letter likened Harry Truman to Abraham Lincoln. I think that's going rather too far. In no Lincoln biography I've read is there the slightest hint that the Railsplitter had the slightest knowledge of the science of poker. Then, too, Harry is one of the greatest piano players the world has ever known and Honest Abe couldn't even strum a banjo.

Also, Lincoln was so soft he wouldn't even fire his vicious personal enemy, Stanton, because he believed the country needed the man. But the majestic Truman didn't hesitate to fire one of our nation's greatest generals, MacArthur.

Only a couple of days ago, Statesman and Philosopher Truman said something that reverberated throughout the world: "We must have peace or doom!" Imagine! Did Lincoln ever say anything half so timely and profound?

All of which goes to show that you can't keep a good man down, for as Shakespeare says, "Genius, like murder, will out, though hell itself freeze over."

If the Kremlin's master minds should hear about "Peace or Doom" who can predict the effect of these wonderful words from Mr. Truman upon them?

LOUIS JOFFE

Pittsburgh 33

Pittsburgh, Sun. Telegraph 2-11-55

TOM WICKER

Of Truman and Lincoln

From interviews with Harry S. Truman recorded 10 years ago by Merle Miller and just now being published, the ringing story has emerged of how Truman put Gen. Douglas MacArthur in his place at their Wake Island meeting in 1950. But there may be more to this story than meets the eye.

The two men were to meet on Wake to discuss strategy in the Korean War. The trouble began when each refused to let his plane land first. Truman finally won this battle of nerves. But when the President looked out the window at the welcoming party, there still was no MacArthur in it.

(The blanks in the following quotations represent Truman's various references to MacArthur's antecedents, or lack of same.)

Even after we stopped the engines and they opened up the door of the plane, the—still didn't show up. So I just sat there . . . I'd have waited until hell froze over if I'd of had to. I wasn't going to have one of my generals embarrass the President of the United States . . . Finally, the—walked out of one of the buildings near the runway there." As soon as he and the general met privately, Truman wasted not a moment coming to the point!

"I took one look at him and I said, 'Now you look here. I've come halfway across the world to meet you, but don't worry about that. I just want you to know I don't give a good goddamn what you do or think about Harry Truman, but don't you ever again keep your commander-in-chief waiting. Is that clear? His face got as red as a beet, but . . . he indicated that he understood what I was talking about, and we went on from there."

This incident—even if discounted a little for the colorful story-teller that Truman was—is bound to remind history buffs of the

Civil War occasion when Gen. George B. McClellan, who enjoyed being called the "Little Napoleon," quite similarly flaunted his rank at Abraham Lincoln.

One night, as Benjamin P. Thomas tells it in his one-volume biography of Lincoln, the President, Secretary of State Seward and Lincoln's assistant, John Hay, "dropped in" at the "little Napoleon's" house. McClellan "was attending an officer's wedding, they were told. After an hour's wait McClellan came in. A servant told him of his visitors, but he went directly upstairs. A half-hour passed. A servant, sent to remind him of his company, came down with the information that the general had gone to bed. On the way home Hay fumed at the insolence of epaulets. The President shrugged it off. This was no time for points of etiquette and personal dignity, he said. 'I will hold McClellan's horse,' he remarked later, 'if he will only bring us success.' Hay noted with satisfaction, however, that thereafter when Lincoln wished to see McClellan, he called him to the White House."

Now it probably is true that Lincoln was in more desperate political circumstances in 1861 than Truman was in 1950; certainly the country was in greater danger. It is also true that Lincoln had few other generals to fall back upon, and recognized that McClellan's superior organizing abilities were vital to the new Union armies.

But when that has been said, and with due deference to Harry Truman, Abraham Lincoln still shines through these stories as a man of far greater wisdom and humility than any of their other participants. That was largely because of his character.

But perhaps it was also due in part to circumstances. Truman was the second of the modern presidents who could and did view himself as a sort of worldwide commander, and the first to have atomic weapons in his arsenal. But Lincoln didn't have to go "halfway across the world"—only around the corner—to see his haughty general. Lincoln did not think of himself as "the only president you've got."

His army was an untrained mob of farm boys, his officers were mostly hack politicians, and there was no National Security Council, Joint Chiefs of Staff, or CIA to share, while glorifying, life-and-death decisions. Mothers of soldiers in the field came to call on Abe Lincoln, long before the sacrosanct Oval Office or the Secret Service were conceived. He could hear the guns across the river, threatening the Republic.

So Lincoln could wield his power—although sometimes ruthlessly—with personal humility. Despite his far greater power, Harry Truman felt he had to insist on the President's rank. Or perhaps it was because of that power.



